Arithmetic Logic Unit (ALU) Project

Sapna Suthar
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1. Abstract

This project implements a 2-stage pipelined Arithmetic Logic Unit (ALU) using SystemVerilog that supports a variety of arithmetic and logical operations, including ADD, SUB, AND, OR, etc. To control ALU behavior, 32-bit RISC-V R-type instructions are decoded using custom decoder and control modules. The design emphasizes modularity and reusability. Verification was performed using ModelSim with a self-checking, randomized testbench to validate functional outputs and flag correctness. The result demonstrates a robust RTL design that can serve as a foundation for future CPU data path expansion.

Table of Contents

2. Introduction

The Arithmetic Logic Unit (ALU) is the central computational component of a processor responsible for executing integer-based arithmetic and logic operations. In modern architectures like RISC-V, the ALU forms a critical part of the datapath, executing instructions based on opcode and function fields. RISC-V is an open-source instruction set architecture (ISA) that emphasizes simplicity, modularity, and extensibility, making it a good choice for this design.

This project aims to implement a functional, pipelined 32-bit ALU capable of interpreting R-type RISC-V instructions. The system uses modular architecture that includes a dedicated instruction decoder, ALU control logic, and a datapath that processes operands through a 2-stage pipeline. The goal was to build, simulate, and validate this system using best practices in RTL design and simulation.

3. Design Overview

The goal of the project was to implement a modular and extendible 32-bit ALU capable of executing a range of arithmetic and logical operations defined by the R-type instruction format of the RISC-V ISA. The design is centered around a two-stage pipeline structure that separates operand preparation and execution to improve clarity, timing, and modular verification.

Stage 1: Register and Decode Inputs

This stage captures the operands (A and B) and the 32-bit instruction into pipeline registers. The instruction is sent to the InstructionDecoder module, which extracts key control fields such as opcode, funct3, funct7, rs1, rs2, and rd. These values are then passed to the ALUControl module, which translates them into a 4-bit ALUOp signal indicating the operation the ALU should perform in the next stage. Registering these values ensures synchronization and prepares the design for multi-cycle expansion in future architectures.

Stage 2: ALU Computation and Flag Generation

Using the registered operands and decoded control signals, this stage executes the ALU operation and produces the output result. It also generates status flags such as Zero, Negative, Carry, and Overflow. These flags are critical for implementing comparison operations and branching logic in full processors.

The design supports fundamental arithmetic operations like ADD and SUB, bitwise logic (AND, OR, XOR), and shift operations (SLL, SRL, SRA). Although all operations are implemented combinationally, the pipeline structure prepares the design to handle multi-cycle operations by introducing controlled latency and clock staging.

To validate functionality, a dedicated randomized testbench (ALU_Pipeline_tb.sv) applies randomized operands with corresponding RISC-V instruction encodings. The pipeline enables output verification per clock cycle, mimicking real CPU execution.

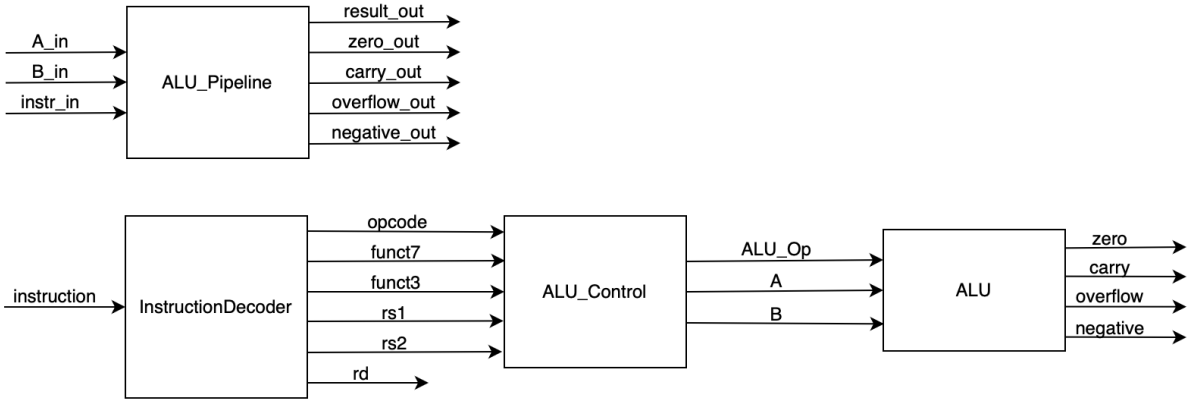
This pipelined ALU reflects the structure of a typical RISC-V datapath and serves as a simplified CPU arithmetic core. The modular design allows for future enhancements such as integrating register files, implementing a memory interface, or adding branch evaluation logic.

3.1 R-Type Instruction Format Breakdown

Control Fields	Bits	Description
funct7	[31:25]	Function code used to differentiate operations with the same funct3/opcode.
rs2	[24:20]	Source register 2 (used as operand B).
rs1	[19:15]	Source register 1 (used as operand A).
funct3	[14:12]	Encodes the operation within the instruction group
rd	[11:7]	Destination register that stores the ALU result.
opcode	[6:0]	Operation code that defines the instruction type (e.g. R-type)

4. System Architecture

4.1 Block Diagram



4.2 Signal Descriptions

ALU

Signal	Input/Output	Width (bits)	Description
A	Input	32	Operand value fetched from source register rs1.
B	Input	32	Operand value fetched from source register rs2.
ALU_Op	Input	4	Control signal specifying the ALU operation.
Zero	Output	1	High if the ALU result is zero.
Carry	Output	1	High if an unsigned addition generates a carry-out.
Overflow	Output	1	High if a signed operation overflows.
Negative	Output	1	High if the result is negative (MSB = 1).

ALU_Control

Signal	Input/Output	Width (bits)	Description
funct7	Input	7	Instruction field used to differentiate ALU operations.
funct3	Input	3	Sub-operation specifier used in combination with opcode.
opcode	Input	7	Instruction type specifier (e.g., 0110011 for R-type).
ALU_Op	Output	4	ALU operation code derived from decoding inputs.

InstructionDecoder

Signal	Input/Output	Width (bits)	Description
instruction	Input	32	32-bit RISC-V instruction input.
opcode	Output	7	Bits [6:0] – Instruction format specifier.
rd	Output	5	Bits [11:7] – Destination register index.
funct3	Output	3	Bits [14:12] – Operation subclass identifier.
funct7	Output	7	Bits [31:25] – Modifier for operation semantics.
rs1	Output	5	Bits [19:15] – Source register 1 index.
rs2	Output	5	Bits [24:20] – Source register 2 index.

ALU_Pipeline

Signal	Input/Output	Width (bits)	Description
A_in	Input	32	Value read from register specified by rs1.
B_in	Input	32	Value read from register specified by rs2.
Instr_in	Input	32	Full 32-bit R-type instruction to be decoded.
Result_out	Output	32	Computed result from the ALU.
Zero_out	Output	1	High if result is zero.
Carry_out	Output	1	High if an unsigned addition overflowed.
Overflow_out	Output	1	High if signed overflow occurred.
Negative_out	Output	1	High if result is negative.

5. Modules & Implementation

5.1 ALU

This is the core computation module that performs all arithmetic and logical operations. Based on the 4-bit ALUOp control signal, it computes results using operations such as ADD, SUB, AND, OR, XOR, and various shift operations. It also generates four status flags: Zero, Negative, Carry, and Overflow, which are essential for evaluating conditional logic in processors.

5.2 InstructionDecoder

This module extracts the functional fields from a 32-bit RISC-V instruction. It parses the opcode, funct3, funct7, rs1, rs2, and rd fields to support accurate decoding of instruction semantics. These values are used downstream in the control logic to determine which ALU operation should be executed.

5.3 ALU_Control

This control module maps the decoded instruction fields (funct3, funct7, opcode) to a corresponding 4-bit ALUOp signal. This abstraction allows the ALU to remain operation-agnostic while the control logic selects the appropriate behavior based on the instruction.

5.4 ALU_Pipeline

This module implements a two-stage pipelined datapath that connects all submodules. In stage one, it latches inputs and decodes instructions. In stage two, it routes the control signals and operands to the ALU and stores the results and flags. It simulates realistic hardware timing and prepares the design for integration into larger CPU datapaths.

6. Testbench & Verification

The functional correctness of the pipelined ALU was verified using a randomized, self-checking testbench defined in ALU_Pipeline_tb.sv. This testbench simulates the top-level ALU_Pipeline module and compares its outputs against a software reference model to validate the correctness of operations across multiple clock cycles.

The testbench begins by handling clock and reset generation. It creates a 10ns clock signal using an always #5 clk = ~clk loop, while the reset signal is toggled at the start to initialize the DUT into a known state before testing begins. Once initialized, the testbench generates ten randomized test cases. Each test consists of two randomly generated 32-bit operands (A_in and B_in) and a randomly selected ALU operation from the supported set: ADD, SUB, AND, OR, XOR, SLL, SRL, and SRA. These values are then encoded into valid 32-bit RISC-V R-type instructions using the correct field layout (funct7, rs2, rs1, funct3, rd, opcode) to emulate realistic instruction-level behavior.

Because the ALU implementation includes a two-stage pipeline, the outputs of the DUT are delayed relative to the inputs. To account for this, the testbench uses a queue (expect_q) to store expected results and synchronize them with the pipelined outputs. On every rising edge of the clock, the testbench dequeues the oldest expected result and compares it against the actual DUT output, ensuring that the two-cycle delay is accurately modeled.

To generate expected outputs for comparison, a reference model is implemented in software using a case statement that mirrors the ALU's behavior. This model handles all implemented operations and generates the correct result, along with associated status flags like Zero and Negative, which are also checked. The testbench uses $display to print detailed information for each test, including operands, instruction fields, expected outputs, and DUT outputs. In the event of a mismatch, a $fatal assertion is triggered to halt simulation and clearly identify the discrepancy.

The verification flow follows a clear sequence: the DUT is reset, randomized tests are generated, instructions are encoded and fed into the pipeline, and the simulation runs long enough to allow the pipeline to flush. Then, outputs are matched against expected values, and any assertion failures are logged.

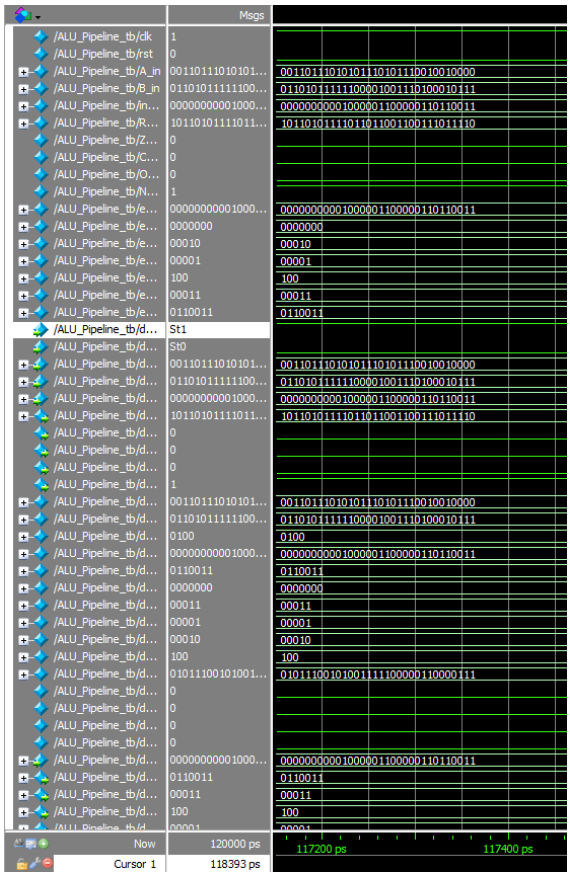
In terms of coverage, this testbench validates all core operations supported by the ALU. It explicitly verifies the Zero and Negative flags, while Carry and Overflow flags are generated but not directly tested in this version—though they can be added easily in the future. The structure of this testbench is modular and reusable, allowing for straightforward extension to support additional instruction types or pipeline stages in more advanced processor designs.

7. Simulation Results

The ALU_Pipeline module was simulated in ModelSim using the ALU_Pipeline_tb.sv testbench. The goal was to validate the correct execution of R-type ALU operations under randomized input conditions. The instruction set tested included a range of arithmetic operations (such as ADD and SUB), logical operations (AND, OR, XOR), and shift operations (SLL, SRL, SRA), ensuring comprehensive functional coverage across different instruction categories.

For each randomized test case, the testbench printed the input operands, the decoded ALU_Op control signal, the output of the DUT, and the expected result from a reference model. Since the ALU design is pipelined, with a two-cycle delay between the application of inputs and the production of outputs, the testbench used a queue to manage and align expected outputs with their corresponding clock cycles. This allowed the verification process to account for pipeline latency accurately. Across all 10 test cases generated in a typical simulation run, no mismatches were observed, demonstrating that the pipeline behaves as expected in both timing and functional correctness.

```
# === RISC-V Randomized ALU Tests ===
# Cycle 0:
#   A     = 0x12f837e7
#   B     = 0x8eb74a7c
#   Instr = 0x002081b3
#   Result= 0x00000000 | Z=1 N=0
#
# Cycle 1:
#   A     = 0x4682679c
#   B     = 0x3030ba1c
#   Instr = 0x402081b3
#   Result= 0xa1af8263 | Z=0 N=1
#
# Cycle 2:
#   A     = 0x519afde8
#   B     = 0xc73523a7
#   Instr = 0x0020f1b3
#   Result= 0x1651ad80 | Z=0 N=0
#
# Cycle 3:
#   A     = 0x61604716
#   B     = 0x456ee1c4
#   Instr = 0x0020e1b3
#   Result= 0x411021a0 | Z=0 N=0
#
# Cycle 4:
#   A     = 0x4879f300
#   B     = 0x03d23d59
#   Instr = 0x0020c1b3
#   Result= 0x656ee7d6 | Z=0 N=0
#
# Cycle 5:
#   A     = 0x58b64df8
#   B     = 0x40c04bfb
#   Instr = 0x002081b3
#   Result= 0x4babce59 | Z=0 N=0
#
# Cycle 6:
#   A     = 0x1fc6b311
#   B     = 0xf9bd74a2
#   Instr = 0x402081b3
#   Result= 0x997699f3 | Z=0 N=1
#
# Cycle 7:
#   A     = 0x3b8f4ffc
#   B     = 0x68c470a5
#   Instr = 0x0020f1b3
#   Result= 0x26093e6f | Z=0 N=0
#
# Cycle 8:
#   A     = 0x31ed88de
#   B     = 0x840d1196
#   Instr = 0x0020e1b3
#   Result= 0x288440a4 | Z=0 N=0
#
# Cycle 9:
#   A     = 0x37575c90
#   B     = 0x6bf09d17
#   Instr = 0x0020c1b3
#   Result= 0xb5ed99de | Z=0 N=1
```



Waveform inspection in ModelSim further confirmed the pipeline's internal signal behavior. During Stage 1, the instruction (instr_in) and operand inputs (A_in, B_in) were latched and decoded into funct3, funct7, and opcode fields, which were then passed to the control unit to generate the ALU_Op. In Stage 2, the ALU received the latched operands along with the control

signal and executed the corresponding operation, producing Result_out along with status flags such as Zero_out and Negative_out. All signals were observed to transition cleanly on each clock edge, with no evidence of hazards or instability in the data path.

Each test case was issued at a rate of one instruction per 10 ns clock cycle. Outputs were then validated two clock cycles after the corresponding inputs were applied, in alignment with the pipeline's design. The result outputs and status flags were consistently correct across all trials.

Although only the Zero and Negative flags were actively checked against expected values in this testbench version, the Carry and Overflow signals were also generated by the ALU and observed in simulation. These could be incorporated into future verification iterations to enhance test coverage. Multiple simulation runs with different random seeds confirmed the reliability and repeatability of the results, validating the robustness of the design and the effectiveness of the testbench.

References

[1] RISC-V Instruction Set Manual, https://riscv.org
[2] ModelSim User Manual, Siemens EDA
[3] Pololu Verilog Examples and Decoder Reference

Appendix A: Source Code

ALU.sv

```
module ALU (
  input  logic [31:0] A, B,
  input  logic [3:0] ALUOp,
  output logic [31:0] Result,
  output logic Zero, Carry, Overflow, Negative
);

  logic [32:0] tmp;

  always_comb begin
    Carry = 0;
    Overflow = 0;
    case (ALUOp)
      4'b0000: begin // ADD
        tmp = A + B;
        Result = tmp[31:0];
        Carry = tmp[32];
        Overflow = (~A[31] & ~B[31] & Result[31]) | (A[31] & B[31] & ~Result[31]);
      end
      4'b0001: begin // SUB
        tmp = A - B;
        Result = tmp[31:0];
        Carry = tmp[32];
        Overflow = (A[31] & ~B[31] & ~Result[31]) | (~A[31] & B[31] & Result[31]);
      end
      4'b0010: Result = A & B;
      4'b0011: Result = A | B;
      4'b0100: Result = A ^ B;
      4'b0101: Result = ~A;
      4'b0110: Result = ~B;
      4'b0111: Result = A << B[4:0];
      4'b1000: Result = A >> B[4:0];
      4'b1001: Result = $signed(A) >>> B[4:0];
      default: Result = 32'd0;
    endcase

    Zero = (Result == 0);
    Negative = Result[31];
  end
endmodule
```

ALU_Control.sv

```
module ALUControl(
  input  logic [6:0] funct7,
  input  logic [2:0] funct3,
  input  logic [6:0] opcode,
  output logic [3:0] ALUOp
);
  always_comb begin
    case (opcode)
      7'b0110011: begin // R-type
        case ({funct7, funct3})
          10'b0000000_000: ALUOp = 4'b0000; // ADD
          10'b0100000_000: ALUOp = 4'b0001; // SUB
          10'b0000000_111: ALUOp = 4'b0010; // AND
          10'b0000000_110: ALUOp = 4'b0011; // OR
          10'b0000000_100: ALUOp = 4'b0100; // XOR
          10'b0000000_001: ALUOp = 4'b0111; // SLL
          10'b0000000_101: ALUOp = 4'b1000; // SRL
          10'b0100000_101: ALUOp = 4'b1001; // SRA
          default: ALUOp = 4'b1111;
        endcase
      end
      default: ALUOp = 4'b1111;
    endcase
  end
endmodule
```

ALU_Pipeline.sv

```
module ALU_Pipeline(
  input  logic clk, rst,
  input  logic [31:0] A_in, B_in,
  input  logic [31:0] instr_in,
  output logic [31:0] Result_out,
  output logic Zero_out, Carry_out, Overflow_out, Negative_out
);

  // Stage 1 registers
  logic [31:0] A_reg, B_reg;
  logic [3:0]  ALUOp;
  logic [31:0] instr_reg;

  // Decoded instruction fields
  logic [6:0] opcode, funct7;
  logic [4:0] rd, rs1, rs2;
  logic [2:0] funct3;
```

```
// Stage 2 outputs
logic [31:0] Result_comb;
logic Zero_comb, Carry_comb, Overflow_comb, Negative_comb;

// Register stage 1
always_ff @(posedge clk or posedge rst) begin
  if (rst) begin
    A_reg <= 0;
    B_reg <= 0;
    instr_reg <= 0;
  end else begin
    A_reg <= A_in;
    B_reg <= B_in;
    instr_reg <= instr_in;
  end
end

// Decode instruction
InstructionDecoder decoder (
  .instruction(instr_reg),
  .opcode(opcode),
  .rd(rd),
  .funct3(funct3),
  .rs1(rs1),
  .rs2(rs2),
  .funct7(funct7)
);

// Generate ALUOp
ALUControl control (
  .opcode(opcode),
  .funct3(funct3),
  .funct7(funct7),
  .ALUOp(ALUOp)
);

// ALU core
ALU alu_inst (
  .A(A_reg),
  .B(B_reg),
  .ALUOp(ALUOp),
  .Result(Result_comb),
  .Zero(Zero_comb),
  .Carry(Carry_comb),
  .Overflow(Overflow_comb),
```

```
    .Negative(Negative_comb)
  );

  // Stage 2 output registers
  always_ff @(posedge clk or posedge rst) begin
    if (rst) begin
      Result_out <= 0;
      Zero_out <= 0;
      Carry_out <= 0;
      Overflow_out <= 0;
      Negative_out <= 0;
    end else begin
      Result_out <= Result_comb;
      Zero_out <= Zero_comb;
      Carry_out <= Carry_comb;
      Overflow_out <= Overflow_comb;
      Negative_out <= Negative_comb;
    end
  end
endmodule
```

InstructionDecoder.sv

```
module InstructionDecoder(
  input  logic [31:0] instruction,
  output logic [6:0]  opcode,
  output logic [4:0]  rd,
  output logic [2:0]  funct3,
  output logic [4:0]  rs1,
  output logic [4:0]  rs2,
  output logic [6:0]  funct7
);
  assign opcode = instruction[6:0];
  assign rd     = instruction[11:7];
  assign funct3 = instruction[14:12];
  assign rs1    = instruction[19:15];
  assign rs2    = instruction[24:20];
  assign funct7 = instruction[31:25];
endmodule
```

Appendix B: ALU Testbench Description

The separate testbench ALU_tb.sv was used to validate the standalone ALU module before integration into the pipelined version. It provides fixed test cases for each operation (ADD, SUB, AND, OR, etc.) and uses $display statements to confirm correctness by comparing expected and actual outputs.

ALU_tb.sv

```
`timescale 1ns / 1ps

module alu_tb;

  // Inputs
  logic [31:0] A, B;
  logic [3:0]  ALUOp;

  // Outputs
  logic [31:0] Result;
  logic        Zero, Carry, Overflow, Negative;

  // Instantiate the ALU
  ALU uut (
    .A(A),
    .B(B),
    .ALUOp(ALUOp),
    .Result(Result),
    .Zero(Zero),
    .Carry(Carry),
    .Overflow(Overflow),
    .Negative(Negative)
  );

  // Test Procedure
  initial begin
    $display("Starting ALU Testbench...");

    // ADD (No overflow)
    A = 32'd10; B = 32'd5; ALUOp = 4'b0000; #10;
    $display("ADD: Result=%0d, C=%b, OF=%b, N=%b, Z=%b", Result, Carry, Overflow,
Negative, Zero);

    // ADD (Overflow case)
    A = 32'sd2147483647; B = 32'sd1; ALUOp = 4'b0000; #10;
    $display("ADD Overflow: Result=%0d, C=%b, OF=%b, N=%b, Z=%b", Result, Carry,
Overflow, Negative, Zero);
```

```
    // SUB (Zero + flag)
    A = 32'd15; B = 32'd15; ALUOp = 4'b0001; #10;
    $display("SUB (Zero): Result=%0d, C=%b, OF=%b, N=%b, Z=%b", Result, Carry,
Overflow, Negative, Zero);

    // SUB (Overflow)
    A = -32'sd2147483648; B = 32'sd1; ALUOp = 4'b0001; #10;
    $display("SUB Overflow: Result=%0d, C=%b, OF=%b, N=%b, Z=%b", Result, Carry,
Overflow, Negative, Zero);

    // AND
    A = 32'hFF00FF00; B = 32'h0F0F0F0F; ALUOp = 4'b0010; #10;
    $display("AND: Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // OR
    A = 32'hAA00AA00; B = 32'h00FF00FF; ALUOp = 4'b0011; #10;
    $display("OR : Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // XOR
    A = 32'hFFFF0000; B = 32'h0000FFFF; ALUOp = 4'b0100; #10;
    $display("XOR: Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // NOT A
    A = 32'hAAAAAAAA; ALUOp = 4'b0101; #10;
    $display("NOT A: Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // NOT B
    B = 32'h55555555; ALUOp = 4'b0110; #10;
    $display("NOT B: Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // SHIFT LEFT
    A = 32'h00000001; B = 32'd4; ALUOp = 4'b0111; #10;
    $display("SLL: Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // SHIFT RIGHT LOGICAL
    A = 32'h80000000; B = 32'd4; ALUOp = 4'b1000; #10;
    $display("SRL: Result=0x%h, Z=%b", Result, Zero);

    // SHIFT RIGHT ARITHMETIC
    A = -32'd16; B = 32'd2; ALUOp = 4'b1001; #10;
    $display("SRA: Result=%0d (0x%h), Z=%b", Result, Result, Zero);

    $display("Testbench complete.");
    $finish;
  end
```

```
endmodule
```

ALU_Pipeline_tb.sv

```
`timescale 1ns / 1ps

module ALU_Pipeline_tb;

  logic clk, rst;

  logic [31:0] A_in, B_in, instr_in;
  logic [31:0] Result_out;
  logic        Zero_out, Carry_out, Overflow_out, Negative_out;

  // DUT instantiation
  ALU_Pipeline dut (
    .clk(clk), .rst(rst),
    .A_in(A_in), .B_in(B_in), .instr_in(instr_in),
    .Result_out(Result_out),
    .Zero_out(Zero_out), .Carry_out(Carry_out),
    .Overflow_out(Overflow_out), .Negative_out(Negative_out)
  );

  // Clock generation
  always #5 clk = ~clk;

  // R-type instruction encoder
  function logic [31:0] encode_rtype(
    input [6:0] funct7,
    input [4:0] rs2, rs1,
    input [2:0] funct3,
    input [4:0] rd,
    input [6:0] opcode
  );
    return {funct7, rs2, rs1, funct3, rd, opcode};
  endfunction

  initial begin
    clk = 0;
    rst = 1;
    A_in = 0;
    B_in = 0;
    instr_in = 0;
    #20;
    rst = 0;

    $display("=== RISC-V Randomized ALU Tests ===");
```

```
    for (int i = 0; i < 10; i++) begin
      A_in = $urandom;
      B_in = $urandom;

      case (i % 5)
        0: instr_in = encode_rtype(7'b0000000, 5'd2, 5'd1, 3'b000, 5'd3, 7'b0110011); // ADD
        1: instr_in = encode_rtype(7'b0100000, 5'd2, 5'd1, 3'b000, 5'd3, 7'b0110011); // SUB
        2: instr_in = encode_rtype(7'b0000000, 5'd2, 5'd1, 3'b111, 5'd3, 7'b0110011); // AND
        3: instr_in = encode_rtype(7'b0000000, 5'd2, 5'd1, 3'b110, 5'd3, 7'b0110011); // OR
        4: instr_in = encode_rtype(7'b0000000, 5'd2, 5'd1, 3'b100, 5'd3, 7'b0110011); // XOR
      endcase

      #10;
      $display("Cycle %0d:", i);
      $display("  A     = 0x%h", A_in);
      $display("  B     = 0x%h", B_in);
      $display("  Instr = 0x%h", instr_in);
      $display("  Result= 0x%h | Z=%b N=%b", Result_out, Zero_out, Negative_out);
      $display("");
    end

    $display("=== Random ALU Test Complete ===");
    $finish;
  end
endmodule
```

Appendix C: Simulation Script (run.do)

A .do file is a TCL-based script used in ModelSim to automate the simulation process. It compiles all relevant source and testbench files, initializes the simulation, and launches waveform viewing.

```
# === ALU Project Simulation Script ===

# Step 1: Create library
vlib work

# Step 2: Compile all source files
vlog ALU.sv
vlog InstructionDecoder.sv
vlog ALU_Control.sv
vlog ALU_Pipeline.sv
vlog ALU_Pipeline_tb.sv

# Step 3: Launch simulation
vsim work.ALU_Pipeline_tb

# Step 4: Add waveforms
add wave -r /*

# Step 5: Run the testbench
run -all
```

To use this file in ModelSim, open the Transcript window and type:

do run.do

This will execute all simulation steps automatically, streamlining testing and debugging workflows.